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ABSTRACT

Accreditation of teacher education programs and licensing and certification of teachers are interrelated but distinct processes that can easily be confused. This Digest seeks to clarify the three processes and identify the primary national organizations involved in these areas. Accreditation is an evaluation process that determines the quality of an institution or program using predetermined standards. Licensing is the process by which a governmental agency grants a license (or permission) to an individual who has met specified requirements. Certification is the process by which a nongovernmental agency or association bestows professional recognition to an individual who has met predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association. This Digest describes the accreditation process of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council; the certification process of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; and the licensing process of both the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Support Consortium and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. (SM)

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Eric Digest
December 1999

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DIGEST

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A Guide to Organizations Involved with Licensing and Certification of Teachers and Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs

Accreditation of teacher education programs and the licensing and certification of teachers are three interrelated but very distinct processes. It is easy to confuse the functions that come under these three areas, particularly when some states use the terms accreditation, licensing, and certification interchangeably. They are key points along a continuum of teacher preparation. The ultimate goal of the processes is to ensure quality teaching. This digest seeks to clarify these three important processes and identify the primary national organizations involved in these areas.

Defining the Processes

Accreditation is an evaluation process that determines the quality of an institution or program using predetermined standards. Accreditation is normally carried out on a peer review basis by competent, nongovernmental agencies such as national, regional, and/or local associations. It is, in essence, a collegial activity conducted by institutions that have voluntarily organized to form and to support an accrediting association. These accrediting agencies or associations prepare standards for education institutions and subsequently apply these standards when evaluating individual institutions seeking accreditation.

Licensing is the process by which a governmental agency grants a license - or permission - to an individual who has met specified requirements. These requirements are usually minimal. Their purpose is to assure the public that the licensed individual will do no harm. In the case of licensing teachers, the intent is to prevent individuals from doing harm in the classroom.

Certification is the process by which a nongovernmental agency or association bestows professional recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association. It can be described as peer approbation, similar to Board certification among medical doctors.

Organizations Involved in the Processes

Accreditation
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
2010 Massachusetts, Ave., NW., Suite 500,
Washington DC 20036-1023
Phone: (202) 466-7496; Fax: (202) 296-6620; www.ncate.org

Founded in 1954, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is a voluntary accrediting body, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, that evaluates and accredits institutions for the preparation of elementary and secondary school teachers, school service personnel, and administrators. NCATE standards focus on the overall quality of the professional education unit. The unit may be the institution or college, school, department, or other administrative body within the institution that is primarily responsible for the initial and continuing preparation of teachers and other professional personnel (NCATE Standards Book, 1997). Standards are currently organized within four categories: (1) design of professional education - curriculum, delivery, and community; (2) candidates in professional education; (3) professional education faculty; and (4) the unit for professional education. Themes throughout the standards include the conceptual framework, diversity, intellectual vitality, technology, professional community, evaluation, and performance assessment. Performance-based standards are the key feature for NCATE 2000, which will emphasize candidate performance (Wise, 1998).

NCATE membership includes public and student representatives and representatives from teacher education institutions, teachers, policy makers, administrators, and specialists as well as subject-specific, child-centered, and technology organizations. Over 30 organizations - including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards - comprise NCATE, and 46 states plus the District of Columbia participate in partnerships with NCATE.

NCATE sponsors several projects, including the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Technical Support Network, Professional Development School Standards Project, NCATE/NBPTS Partnership for Graduate Programs, and Technology Initiatives.

Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)
One Dupont Circle, Suite 320, Washington DC 20036-0110
Phone: (202) 466-7230; Fax: (202) 466-7238; www.teac.org

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) was developed in 1998 in response to a concern of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) that NCATE is the only national teacher education accreditation association, and it accredits less than half of the 1,260 institutions of higher education that offer teacher education programs (Basinger, 1998). TEAC was formally incorporated in 1997 and has petitioned the U.S. Department of Education for recognition.

The TEAC mission is to promote professional education programs in colleges and universities by recognizing those of the highest quality. It plans to develop an alternative accreditation process that relies on a continuing institutional self-examination reinforced by external audits. Four principles of quality are identified by TEAC: (1) student learning; (2) assessment of student learning; (3) institutional learning; and (4) institutional commitment. TEAC will audit the institutions' internal processes for assessing student learning and assist institutions in the continuous improvement of their teacher education programs. The institution will choose which standards it will use, and the academic audit will serve as an evaluation tool.

The governance of TEAC differs from that of NCATE. Rather than having professional associations appoint individuals to the governing board, individuals are elected by the member institutions. There are 51 candidate member institutions and 18 affiliate members (www.teac.org/members.html, 1999). About half of the members of the Board of Directors are either college presidents or deans or directors of teacher education programs. The other half are teachers, public officials who oversee education, representatives of national associations, and members of the general public.

Certification
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
26555 Evergreen Road, Suite 400,
Southfield MI 48076
Phone: (248) 351-4444; Fax: (248) 351-4170; www.nbpts.org

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was created in 1987. Its membership includes teachers and state and local officials in the field

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of elementary and secondary education, and leaders from the business community and higher education. It seeks to strengthen the profession of teaching and thereby raise the quality of education. Its mission is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do; to develop and operate a national, voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards; and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools.

NBPTS hopes that advanced certification will act as a catalyst to transform teaching as a career by enabling states and schools to recognize outstanding teaching professionals, offer them better compensation, provide them with increased responsibilities, and place important decisions about teaching policy and practices in their hands. NBPTS is also concerned with education policy and reform issues such as teacher preparation recruitment (particularly among minorities) and the role NBPTS-certified teachers will play in schools. The standards grow out of a central policy statement: *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. The NBPTS' five core propositions, outlined in the statement, are: (1) teachers are committed to students and their learning; (2) teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; (3) teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; (4) teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and (5) teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 1994). Key components of this certification process are that candidates complete portfolios and participate in on-demand tasks at assessment centers.

Licensing

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)
One Massachusetts Ave. NW, #700,
Washington DC 20001-1431
Phone: (202) 336-7048; Fax: (202) 408-8072; http://www.ccsso.org/intasc.html

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) was established in 1987 by the Council of Chief State School Officers to enhance collaboration among states interested in rethinking teacher licensing and assessment for education professionals. In 1993, the consortium proposed model standards that described what beginning teachers should know and be able to do. These standards were drafted by representatives of the teaching profession and personnel from 17 education agencies. (www.ccsso.org, 1999). Currently 33 states are members of INTASC. The standards, applicable for beginning teachers of all disciplines and all levels, are compatible with the national teacher certification standards proposed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and are organized around 10 principles. An important attribute of the standards is that they are performance-based; according to the consortium, more emphasis is placed upon the abilities teachers develop rather than the hours they spend completing course work. These performance-based standards should enable states to have greater innovation and diversity in how teacher education programs operate by assessing outcomes rather than inputs or procedures.

Besides these model standards, which address the knowledge, dispositions, and performance of all teachers, INTASC is also developing subject-area standards for new teachers. These standards currently include English/language arts, mathematics, and science, with elementary, art, social studies, and special education in the development stage. The assessments that can be used to evaluate a new teacher's performance against these standards are being developed through the Performance Assessment Development Project, a program designed for the licensing of beginning teachers and includes the use of portfolios to determine licensing of candidates. INTASC is also developing a cadre of teachers, teacher educators, and state education staff who can implement the assessments in their states.

In addition, INTASC has contracted with Educational Testing Services (ETS) to develop the Test for Teaching Knowledge (TTK), which is based on the model standards. The TTK is a constructed-response test based on authentic situations facing beginning teachers. Pilot sessions were conducted in the spring of 1999. A field test will be conducted in 2000 (www.ccsso.org, 1999).

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)
Council of Chief State School Officers
One Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 700,
Washington DC 20001-1431
Phone: (202) 408-5505; Fax: (202) 408-8072; www.ccsso.org/isllc.html

Established in 1995, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers and operates in partnership with the National Board for Educational Administration. Similar to INTASC, it is a consortium of states and associations formed to develop model standards and assessments for school leaders. Membership includes representatives of state agencies/departments of education, professional standards boards, and major educational leadership associations.

Conclusion

The processes of accreditation, licensing, and certification are intended to complement each other, with a goal of assuring a system of quality in the practice of teaching. In general, accreditation provides quality control and consumer protection at the institutional level in preservice preparation; licensing provides quality control and consumer protection with individual candidates; and certification provides recognition for accomplished practitioners through continuing professional development. Like many areas of education, the system is still evolving.

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The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able To Do* (1994).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, *Standards Procedures and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units* (1997).

Wise, A. *Quality Teaching* (Spring 1998), The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Web sites:

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, www.ccsso.org/intasc.html

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, www.ccsso.org/isllc.html

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, www.npbts.org.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, www.ncate.org.

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council, www.teac.org.

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